England. — Churches, etc. — Baptists. — 1130
Midland Assoc.

The CIRCULAR LETTER.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

ELDERS and MESSENGERS

OF THE SEVERAL

BAPTIST CHURCHES,

Meeting at *Aulceſter*, *Bengworth*, *Bewdley*, *Birmingham*, *Bridgnorth*, *Bromſgrove*, *Dudley*, *Hooknorton*, *Leominſter*, *Middleton*, *Perſhore*, *Tewkſbury*, *Upton*, *Warwick*, and *Worceſter*, Met in ASSOCIATION at PERSHORE, the 1ſt. and 2d. of JUNE, 1773; and holding the Doctrines of *Three equal Perſons in the God-head*; *eternal and perſonal Election*; *original Sin*; *particular Redemption*; *free Juſtification by the Righteouſneſs of* CHRIST; *efficacious Grace in Regeneration*; and *the final Perſeverance of the Saints*:

To the Churches they repreſent, ſend Chriſtian Salutation.

Dearly beloved in Chriſt,

THE natural Imperfection of your retentive Faculties, which is much increaſed with reſpect to things divine and ſpiritual, by the Depravity of your Natures, makes it highly neceſſary that you ſhould have Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept. The pureſt Minds have need to be ſtirred up by Way of Remembrance, and therefore a Repetition of ſome Things, which have been addreſſed to you in Times paſt, may not be unprofitable.

We perſuade ourſelves, that were you to know how anxious we are, and how fervently we pray, that

that we may convey ſomething to you, which with a divine Bleſſing, may promote the Life and Power of Godlineſs in your Souls, you would receive our Advice with great Seriouſneſs and Attention. We hope that we can ſincerely ſay with the Apoſtle, though not with equal Intenſeneſs of Affection, that we long to impart ſome ſpiritual Gift unto you, to the End you may be eſtabliſhed. We earneſtly wiſh, that God would by his Spirit ſtrengthen you in your inner Man, and that you might be filled with all the Fulneſs of God.

To this End therefore endeavour to cheriſh upon your Minds, an unſhaken Belief that there is a God. We are not ignorant of Satan's Devices to tempt to the contrary. Behold him in his Works of Nature, Grace, and Providence, and conſider yourſelves, not only as under his Eye, but encompaſſed with his Eſſence. In him we live, move and have our being. This Practice duly improved, has contributed much to the high Attainments of ſeveral eminent Men. It had a powerful Influence, upon the invincible Perſeverance of *Moſes* in the Ways of real Piety and true Religion, amidſt all the Temptations, and great Difficulties, which lay in his Way. He endured as ſeeing him who is inviſible. Meditate on the divine Attributes, and implore Help from Heaven to enable you to make Uſe of each of them in your daily Walk with God, according to your ſeveral Caſes and Circumſtances.

Conſider God as your ſovereign Lord and Lawgiver, that he has a Right to do as he pleaſes with you, either to ſmile or frown upon you in the Courſe of his Providence, to lift upon you the Light of his Countenance and fill you with Joy

and

and Gladneſs, or to hide his Face and give you Trouble. When you are exerciſed with the moſt dark and diſtreſſing Diſpenſations, you have Liberty by Prayer and Supplication to make known your Requeſts unto God, but muſt be dumb and not open your Mouths in Complaints againſt him. Remember that the ſevereſt Strokes of his Rod, are as much the Fruit of his Love, as the ſweeteſt Conſolations of his Spirit, and that Afflictions are not only the common Lot of the Children of Men, but alſo of the Children of God. *Whom the Lord loveth he rebuketh, and chaſtneth every Son whom he receiveth.*

As we are to yield up ourſelves to the Dealings of God's Hand, ſo we are to the Words of his Mouth. Whatever he reveals as his Will, we are indiſputably bound to believe and practiſe; and ſhould by no Means wiſh to have other Articles of Faith, and Rules of Obedience. We are to ſubmit our Underſtandings to the unerring Dictates of Heaven, and not bring the divine Oracles to the Bar of our imperfect Reaſon. And what Doctrine ſoever is plainly revealed therein, though inexplicable by a finite Mind, we ſhould give our firmeſt Aſſent to it, notwithſtanding it ſhould be oppoſed by the greateſt Names upon Earth, and all the Arguments that Sophiſtry can invent. *

We entreat you, dear Brethren, to attend with all Diligence, to thoſe perſonal and ſocial Duties, which are required of you in the ſacred Scriptures. We are commanded to keep our Hearts with all Diligence, and to let the ſame Mind be in

* To aſſiſt your Faith in ſome controverted Points of great Importance, we recommend the diligent Peruſal of a ſmall Tract, intitled, "An Addreſs to the ſerious and candid Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, &c."

in us, which was in Chriſt Jeſus. Beg of God to give you an holy, humble, and heavenly Diſpoſition of Soul, and endeavour to ſuppreſs the firſt Motions of Sin and Vanity in your Hearts. This will prevent much Evil in your Lives and Converſations, and Abundance of Sadneſs and Grief, which are the certain Conſequences of Careleſſneſs and Neglect.

Frequently retire for ſecret Prayer, and holy Meditation. Theſe Exerciſes greatly promote the Proſperity of the Soul. By theſe many a Chriſtian has kept up ſweet Communion with God, and experienced ſuch an Encreaſe in the divine Life, which thoſe are unacquainted with, who live much in the Neglect of theſe ſweet and important Duties.

We repeat our Exhortation to you, to keep up Family Religion. It is no ſmall Blemiſh in the Character of a profeſſed Chriſtian, not to erect an Altar for God in his Houſe, and to be regardleſs of the eternal Welfare of his Children and Servants.

So far as you can, give timely and conſtant Attendance at the Houſe of God, and be not only concerned to find the Word, but to eat and digeſt it, that you may grow and flouriſh in the Courts of the Lord. Leanneſs of Soul, is the inſeparable Infelicity of a luke-warm and indifferent Worſhipper.

Make Conſcience of ſacred Time; and dont think that the Buſineſs of the Day is over, when public Services are ended *. Let no Part of it be filled up with idle Chat, and worldly Converſation; nor dare do that, which is only lawful for you

* See a ſmall Piece, lately Publiſhed by our Brother TURNER, intitled, "The Duty of Keeping, and the Sin of Profaning the SABBATH Day.

you to do on the ſix preceding Days. He that keepeth a Day, let him keep it wholly to the Lord.

When you meet together in private, let your Converſation be ſuch, as ſhall be calculated to promote your eternal Intereſt. Relate to each other, what God has done for your Souls; you will find a Benefit ariſing from it, which you cannot eaſily imagine. When this was moſt practiſed, Religion was in its greateſt Proſperity, and did not a little contribute to it. When inward Peace and Purity moſt prevailed, it was then when they that feared the Lord, ſpake often one to another, and maintained a Converſation, ſuitable to their diſtinguiſhed and exalted Character.

Entertain in your Minds brotherly Love; and whenever you are offended, let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath; and always look upon an implacable Spirit, as a diabolical Spirit. All Bitterneſs and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and evil Speaking, put away from you, with all Malice.

Study the Things which make for Peace; and ſhould any Thing ariſe amongſt you and diſturb your Tranquility, ſuppreſs it as ſoon as poſſible; knowing that the Beginning of Strife, is as the letting out of Water: The longer it continues, the wider will the Breach be. And ſhould any be indiſpoſed to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, let them be diſcountenanced, and looked upon as Enemies to the Welfare of Society.

Pay a due Regard to the Door of God's Sanctuary: As much as in you lies, ſee that his Houſe is built upon with new but living Stones; and take Care that thoſe are excluded, who after the Exerciſe

erciſe of due Patience, and of the Rules of the Goſpel, appear as Heathens and Publicans. Always look to it that the Diſcipline of the Church be juſt and impartial, ſuch as is required by Chriſt, our Lord and Lawgiver, and never ſuffer the Keys of the Church, nor the Privilege of the Lord's Table, to be under the Direction of thoſe, who have no other Deſign, than to gratify their Ill-will, and private Reſentments.

We would not forget to recommend weekly Meetings for Prayer and Chriſtian Conference. Theſe Exerciſes have been very ſerviceable in the Intereſt of vital Godlineſs, and have been the Means of improving the Gifts of many, who have become able Miniſters of the New Teſtament. And we think it your Duty when you ſee the Dawnings of a Capacity for public Uſefulneſs, eſpecially in any of your younger Brethren, to encourage them all in your Power, not knowing but they may become burning and ſhining Lights, in their Day and Generation.

Many more Duties might be laid before you and where your help lies to perform them, might be pointed out. Powerful Motives to engage your Attention, might be drawn from the Grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who obtained eternal Redemption for you: From the electing Love of God the Father, and from the Communion of the Holy Ghoſt, by whom ſpiritual Bleſſings are brought home to your Souls. But Prolixity is needleſs, while you have a Book in your Hands, dictated by the ſupreme Wiſdom, and which is a perfect Rule of Faith and Obedience, and able in the Hands of the infallible Teacher, to make you wiſe to Salvation.

Now may the God of Peace which brought again from the Dead the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that great

great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well pleaſing in his Sight, through Jeſus Chriſt. To whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen. Signed, in Behalf of the Brethren, by the Moderator.

JOSHUA THOMAS.

BREVIATES.

ON Tueſday Evening the Meſſengers of the Churches, through the Kindneſs of Providence arrived in ſafety, and after a little Time improved in Prayer, Brother THOMAS was Choſen Moderator, and the Letters were read, and their Contents conſidered: Different cauſes of Joy and Sorrow, we hope, made correſpondent Impreſſions on our Hearts. We thank the Fountain of all Goodneſs, the Churches are in Peace, are all provided with Miniſters and Plenty of the Means. Complaints we have heard, and Complaints we ſhall continue to hear while in the Body. The moſt Pious Perſon and pureſt Church in the Preſent State, will have daily cauſe to Cry, "My Leanneſs! my Leanneſs!"——This Opportunity was concluded by Prayer.——We met again the next Morning at Six o'Clock to ſpread your Wants and ours before the Lord: Brother ASH was deſired to produce the Circular Letter, which he did, and it was read and approved.——At half paſt Ten the Public Service was introduced by our Brother WILLS with Singing and Prayer: Brother SKINNER proceeded in Prayer; Brother BEDDOME Preached from *James* 1. 26. *This Man's Religion is vain*: Brother JAMES BUTTERWORTH concluded the Morning Service.

At half paſt Two o'Clock Brother L. BUTTERWORTH opened the Public Meeting with Singing and Prayer; Brother TURNER ſucceeded him; Brother HILLER Preached from 2 *Cor.* 2. 16. *To the one we are the Savour of Death unto Death; and to the other, the Savour of Life unto Life: And who is ſufficient for theſe Things?* Brother POYNTING concluded the Service by Prayer. The Meſſengers made a ſhort Stay, and Brother ASH cloſed the whole Buſineſs of the Aſſociation by Prayer.---At half paſt Six in the Evening Brother THOMAS Preached a Sermon from *Heb.* 4. 7. *To Day if ye will hear his Voice*:

The

The Preſent State of the Aſſociated Churches.

The ADDITION this Year	Baptized	43	
	Received by Letter	7	
			50
DIMINUTION	Dead	25	
	Excluded	5	
	Diſmiſſed	8	
			38
Total INCREASE			12

The next Aſſociation to be at *Bengworth*, to meet on *Tueſday* Evening in the *Whitſun Week*:

Put up at the UNICORN.

Our Brethren POYNTING and WILLS to Preach; in Caſe of Failure Brother JAMES BUTTERWORTH.

AGREED, That the Meſſengers preſent their Sincereſt Thanks to the Author of the "Addreſs to the Serious and Candid Profeſſors of Chriſtianity," &c. for his Noble and able Defence of ſome of the Fundamental Doctrines of Religion; and ſincerely Wiſh his Labours may be crowned with Succeſs.

AGREED, To hold a Day of Faſting and Prayer among all the Churches of this Aſſociation, the laſt whole Week in this Month, and that every Church obſerve that Day of the Week which is moſt Convenient: The Situation of the Poor, and of Trade in the Nation, loudly call for it.

FINIS.

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